

Nuri Purwanto¹
Amelia Amelia²
Suraya Ika Tamrin³

¹ ITEBIS PGRI
Dewantara

² Binus University
Jakarta

³ University Teknologi
Mara, Malaysia

From authenticity to action: The mediating role of electronic word of mouth on TikTok in shaping Gen Z purchase intention toward Indonesian halal cosmetics

Abstract

The growth of social commerce and influencer-based marketing on TikTok has transformed how Generation Z consumers evaluate and decide to purchase products, including local halal cosmetics in Indonesia. This study aims to analyze the effects of influencer authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal on Generation Z's purchase intention, with electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on TikTok serving as a mediating variable. This research employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 300 Generation Z respondents in Indonesia who actively use TikTok, are familiar with or use local halal cosmetics, and have been exposed to influencer content related to such products. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The results indicate that influencer authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal have positive and significant effects on e-WOM. Furthermore, e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention and significantly mediates the relationships between the three influencer attributes and purchase intention. Authenticity emerges as the strongest predictor, followed by expertise, while visual appeal has the weakest yet still significant effect. These findings highlight the importance of authentic, competent, and socially engaging influencers in stimulating positive digital conversations and increasing Generation Z's purchase intention toward local halal cosmetics.

Keywords: Influencer authenticity; influencer expertise; visual appeal; electronic word-of-mouth; purchase intention; Generation Z; halal cosmetics; TikTok.

Abstrak

Perkembangan social commerce dan pemasaran berbasis influencer di TikTok telah mengubah cara Generasi Z mengevaluasi dan memutuskan pembelian produk, termasuk kosmetik halal lokal di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh autentisitas, keahlian, dan daya tarik visual influencer terhadap niat pembelian Generasi Z, dengan electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) di TikTok sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei potong lintang. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring terhadap 300 responden Generasi Z di Indonesia yang aktif menggunakan TikTok, mengenal atau menggunakan kosmetik halal lokal, dan pernah terpapar konten influencer terkait produk tersebut. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) dengan SmartPLS 4. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa autentisitas, keahlian, dan daya tarik visual influencer berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap e-WOM. Selanjutnya, e-WOM berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap niat pembelian, serta secara signifikan memediasi hubungan antara ketiga atribut influencer dan niat pembelian. Autentisitas merupakan prediktor terkuat, diikuti keahlian, sedangkan daya tarik visual memiliki pengaruh paling kecil namun tetap signifikan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya influencer yang autentik, kompeten, dan mampu mendorong percakapan digital positif untuk meningkatkan niat pembelian Generasi Z terhadap kosmetik halal lokal.

Kata Kunci: Autentisitas influencer; keahlian influencer; daya tarik visual; electronic word-of-mouth; niat pembelian; Generasi Z; kosmetik halal; TikTok

Implementasi **IMKA**
Manajemen & Kewirausahaan

E-ISSN 2776 – 8554

¹ Corresponding author: Nuri Purwanto
Email: nuri.stiedw@itebisdewantara.ac.id

1. Introduction

The digital technology revolution has fundamentally transformed the marketing landscape, shifting the role of consumers from passive recipients to active participants in the brand communication ecosystem. Social media is no longer just a space for social interaction, but has evolved into a social commerce arena where purchasing decisions are shaped through user interactions, shared content, and recommendations from the online community (Shen et al., 2021). Among various platforms, TikTok has emerged as a dominant force in shaping the preferences of young consumers, mainly due to its viral algorithm and immersive short video format (Duong & Vo, 2025)

In Indonesia, the significance of social commerce is getting stronger along with the dominance of Generation Z as digital natives who are very responsive to digital marketing, including influencer marketing (Suryadi et al., 2025). In the beauty industry, reviews and tutorials from influencers are often more trusted than conventional advertising because they are perceived as more personal and authentic (Jamil et al., 2023). Indonesia's halal cosmetics industry provides a relevant context to examine these dynamics. As the country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia recorded halal cosmetics spending of US\$70 billion in 2021, with more than 26,000 halal-certified products, making it the world's second-largest consumer of halal cosmetics (Supriani et al., 2025; Virgiawan et al., 2024; Widiastuti et al., 2024). This growth shows that halal cosmetics have become part of the lifestyle of young Indonesian consumers who are digital-savvy.

However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends heavily on the attributes inherent in the influencer. The literature identifies three main attributes: authenticity (sincerity and honesty in recommending products), craftsmanship (relevant knowledge and credibility), and visual appeal (aesthetic quality of content and appearance) (Jamil et al., 2023; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Maziriri et al., 2021). In the context of TikTok, these three attributes become crucial because persuasion takes place through a combination of credible information, emotional resonance, and aesthetic appeal.

To understand this persuasion mechanism, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) offers a relevant theoretical framework (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). ELM distinguishes between the central route where the quality of the argument (expertise) is the deciding factor and the peripheral route where cues such as authenticity and visual appeal are more influential when the audience is less motivated to process the information in depth. In a social commerce environment, the influence of these attributes does not stop at the reception of individual messages. Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which is the exchange of opinions and experiences about products through digital platforms, acts as a social mechanism that expands the impact of influencer messages. When audiences receive messages from authentic, expert, or visually appealing influencers, they are more likely to share them, creating social diffusion that strengthens the credibility of the message and ultimately influences purchase intent (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021; Ngo et al., 2024). Within the framework of social influence theory (Goodwin, 1987), this process can be explained through the mechanisms of internalization (expertise), identification (authenticity), and compliance (visual appeal).

Although the existing literature has provided valuable findings, there are still some important gaps. First, most studies test authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal separately, thus failing to capture the complexity of the interaction of the three in shaping consumer perception. Second, there is still little research that explicitly examines the role

of e-WOM mediation in linking influencer attributes to purchase intent, even though understanding this mechanism is important to explain how influencer influence translates into consumer actions. Third, empirical attention to the specific context of TikTok in promoting halal cosmetic products in Indonesia is still limited, even though this context brings together three crucial dimensions: products with religious sensitivity (halal), digital consumers (Gen Z), and platforms with distinctive persuasion mechanisms (TikTok).

Based on these gaps, this study aims to develop a conceptual model that integrates the authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of influencers as an antecedent to e-WOM, which further mediates its influence on Generation Z's purchase intentions on Indonesian halal cosmetics on TikTok. Theoretically, this study contributes by: (1) integrating the three main attributes of influencers in a single analytical framework, allowing a comparative evaluation of the relative strength of each attribute; (2) enriching the understanding of the social processes that bridge interpersonal communication with consumer behavior through e-WOM, while expanding the application of ELM and social influence theory in the context of social commerce; and (3) providing empirical evidence from unique non-Western contexts, diversifying the literature that has been dominated by studies from developed countries. In practical terms, the research findings are expected to guide local halal cosmetics brands in designing more effective influencer marketing strategies, choosing the right partners, and designing campaigns that spark positive conversations among consumers.

This study answers the question: to what extent does the authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of influencers influence Generation Z's purchase intentions of Indonesian halal cosmetics, and how does e-WOM mediate this relationship on the TikTok platform?

2. Literature review

2.1 Influencer authenticity

Influencer authenticity refers to the extent to which an influencer is perceived as genuine, sincere, honest, and trustworthy in conveying messages to the audience. In digital marketing, authenticity is one of the important foundations of building consumer trust, especially when audiences are increasingly sensitive to promotional content that feels too commercial or contrived. Influencers who are considered authentic tend to be seen as more credible and easier to build psychological closeness with their followers. This closeness and trust ultimately increases the likelihood of consumers responding, sharing, or discussing the messages conveyed by influencers in the form of e-WOM (García-Haro et al., 2024; Jamil et al., 2023)

Previous literature shows that perceptions of influencer credibility and *relatability* affect consumers' attitudes towards the information shared. In addition, the quality of content that is seen as genuine and useful also increases consumer participation in e-WOM activities. Honest communication not only strengthens trust, but also encourages satisfaction and loyalty, which in turn is closely related to the dissemination of positive recommendations in the digital environment (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2021; Istikhroh et al., 2021; Zaman et al., 2021). Thus, in the context of Indonesian halal cosmetics on TikTok, influencer authenticity is expected to be an important driver for the formation of positive e-WOM.

H1: Influencer authenticity has a positive effect on *electronic word-of-mouth*.

2.2 Influencer expertise and e-WOM

Influencer expertise refers to the audience's perception of the influencer's level of knowledge, competence, and ability to explain, evaluate, or recommend a product. On social media, especially on platforms filled with short and quick information like TikTok, expertise is important because it helps consumers judge whether a message is trustworthy. Influencers who have a deep understanding of product categories, ingredients, benefits, and uses tend to be more persuasive than influencers who rely solely on popularity or visuals (Jamil et al., 2023)

Based on ELM, the expertise of sources plays a role in strengthening the central line of persuasion. When consumers perceive influencers to be highly competent, they tend to process messages more seriously, so the informational value of the message increases and behavioral responses become stronger. Previous studies have also shown that influencers who are seen as experts and credible are more effective at creating meaningful interactions, enriching digital conversations, and reinforcing positive e-WOM. In fact, in some contexts, *micro-influencers* who are psychologically closer to the audience can result in stronger engagement and e-WOM because they are considered more relevant, authentic, and specific to a particular niche (Guedes Furquim et al., 2025; Palazón et al., 2024). Therefore, the higher the expertise of an influencer, the more likely it is that their message encourages the audience to share information and recommendations online.

H2: Influencers' expertise has a positive effect on *electronic word-of-mouth*.

2.3 Influencer visual appeal and e-WOM

Influencer visual appeal refers to the level of aesthetic appeal displayed through personal appearance and the quality of content presentation. In the context of visual social media like TikTok, visual appeal is not only related to physical appearance, but also includes elements of composition, lighting, *color tone*, creativity, and overall video presentation quality. Visually appealing content tends to be more likely to capture the audience's attention, increase viewing comfort, and create a positive affective experience (BeauVis, 2022; Maziriri et al., 2021)

According to ELM, the appeal of the source can work through the peripheral path, which is when the consumer does not always evaluate the content of the message in depth, but remains driven by pleasing visual cues. In this context, influencers who have a strong visual presentation can increase message acceptance, enjoyment, and the audience's tendency to interact with the content. Previous studies have also shown that visual appeal can strengthen brand perception, increase engagement, and stimulate the spread of positive e-WOM (Jamil et al., 2023) While its role may not be as strong as authenticity and expertise in building trust, visual appeal remains an important element in attracting early attention and driving the dissemination of digital experiences.

H3: Influencers' visual appeal has a positive effect on *electronic word-of-mouth*.

2.4 e-WOM and purchase intention

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is defined as comments, reviews, opinions, or positive or negative experiences regarding products and services delivered through digital platforms. In the *era of social commerce*, e-WOM has become one of the most influential sources of information on consumer evaluation and purchase decisions because it is

considered closer to the real experience of other users than formal brand communication. Information disseminated through e-WOM can affect consumer confidence, reduce uncertainty, and shape perceptions of the quality, credibility, and feasibility of a product (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021; Ngo et al., 2024).

Previous studies have shown that positive e-WOM can improve brand reputation and strengthen purchase intent. The spread of social media and online platforms also magnifies the impact of e-WOM by enabling real-time interaction between consumers and brands, making messages faster, more relevant, and more widely reached (Ardyan et al., 2021). In addition, trust in e-WOM sources is an important factor in shaping purchase intentions. When consumers view online information as trustworthy, they tend to be more confident to consider or purchase recommended products (Urinbaeva et al., 2023). In the context of Generation Z and halal cosmetics, e-WOM on TikTok can serve as a social amplifier that validates products, strengthens brand credibility, and encourages purchase intent.

H4: Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive effect on purchase intent.

2.5 The mediating role of e-WOM

In addition to having a direct effect on purchase intent, e-WOM can also be understood as a mechanism that bridges the relationship between influencer attributes and consumer responses. In the context of influencer marketing, audiences don't necessarily change their perception into purchase intent just because they see an authentic, expert, or visually appealing influencer. Instead, these influences often translate first into the form of digital social interactions, such as sharing opinions, providing recommendations, disseminating experiences, and discussing products through e-WOM. Thus, e-WOM serves as a channel that transmits the influence of influencer attributes into consumer purchase intent.

The authenticity of influencers is expected to strengthen e-WOM because sincere and open communication increases consumer trust in the message being conveyed. As trust increases, consumers are more motivated to respond positively and disseminate information to other users. In this case, e-WOM is a mechanism that connects the influence of authenticity with purchase intent (Huwaida, 2024; Jamil et al., 2023). Similarly, influencer expertise can enrich the quality of information and strengthen the perception of credibility, which ultimately increases the audience's tendency to share information and build an e-WOM that drives purchase intent. Meanwhile, visual appeal can evoke positive emotions, increase engagement, and encourage audiences to interact with content, thereby expanding the spread of e-WOM which then affects purchase intent (Guedes Furquim et al., 2025; Jamil et al., 2023). On this basis, e-WOM is predicted to mediate the influence of authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of influencers on purchase intent

H5: Electronic word-of-mouth mediates the relationship between influencer authenticity and purchase intent.

H6: Electronic word-of-mouth mediates the relationship between an influencer's expertise and purchase intent.

H7: Electronic word-of-mouth mediates the relationship between an influencer's visual appeal and purchase intent.

3. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a *cross-sectional survey* design to test the influence of authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of *influencers* on Generation Z's purchase intentions in Indonesian halal cosmetics, with *electronic word-of-mouth* (e-WOM) on TikTok as a mediating variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study population is Indonesian Generation Z (17–26 years old) who use local halal cosmetics and are active on TikTok. The sample was taken using a *purposive sampling* technique based on criteria: age 17–26 years, active on TikTok (at least three times a week), having bought or using local halal cosmetics, and having been exposed to *influencer content* related to halal cosmetics on TikTok in the last three months. Of the 412 questionnaires distributed online, 300 responses were declared valid and used in the analysis, this number exceeded the minimum recommendation for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2021; Ringle et al., 2022)

Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. To minimize the potential *for common method bias*, procedural steps such as anonymity, random item sorting, and the use of validated instruments are carried out (Podsakoff et al., 2003) Harman's *single-factor test* showed that one factor only explained 32.4% of the variance (< 50%), so *common method bias* was not a serious problem. The entire construct was measured reflectively with indicators adapted from previous research: authenticity (Lee & Eastin, 2021) craftsmanship (Lee & Eastin, 2021), visual appeal (BeauVis, 2022), e-WOM (Prabawati & Fadhilla, 2024), and purchase intent (Ali et al., 2025).

Data analysis using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4 went through two stages. The first stage evaluated the measurement model through convergent validity (*outer loading* > 0.70; AVE > 0.50), reliability (Cronbach's α > 0.70; CR > 0.70), and discriminant validity (HTMT < 0.85). The second stage tested the structural model by *bootstrapping* 5000 resamples to assess the path coefficient, significance ($t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$), effect size (f^2), and predictive ability (R^2 , Q^2). Mediation testing was carried out by evaluating the indirect influence and *its* confidence interval

4. Results

This study involved 300 valid respondents from Generation Z Indonesia who use local halal cosmetics and actively use TikTok. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were women as many as 255 people (85.0%), while male respondents amounted to 45 people (15.0%). Based on age group, the majority of respondents were in the range of 21-23 years as many as 130 people (43.3%), followed by the age group of 17-20 years as many as 100 people (33.3%) and 24-26 years as many as 70 people (23.3%). In terms of education, most of the respondents had a diploma/bachelor's education (S1) as many as 175 people (58.3%), followed by high school graduates/equivalent as many as 120 people (40.0%), while respondents with postgraduate education (S2/S3) were only 5 people (1.7%). The most mentioned cosmetic brands are Wardah (26.7%), followed by Emina

(20.0%), Make Over (16.7%), Somethinc (13.3%), Sariayu (10.0%), and other brands such as BLP and Avoskin (13.3%). These findings show that the study respondents are dominated by young female consumers who are educated, digitally active, and quite familiar with local Indonesian halal cosmetics brands.

Table 1. Characteristic Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Quantity (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Woman	255	85.0
	Man	45	15.0
Age	17–20 years	100	33.3
	21–23 years old	130	43.3
	24–26 years old	70	23.3
Final Education	High School/Equivalent	120	40.0
	Diploma/Sarjana (S1)	175	58.3
	Postgraduate (S2/S3)	5	1.7
Cosmetic Brands	Wardah	80	26.7
	Emina	60	20.0
	Make Over	50	16.7
	Somethinc	40	13.3
	Sariayu	30	10.0
	Others (BLP, Avoskin, etc.)	40	13.3

Source: Authors’ own data processing (2025)

Table 2. Convergent Validity Analysis results

Construct	Items	Outer Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Influencer Authenticity (X1)	IA_1	0.909	0.872	0.921	0.796
	IA_2	0.880			
	IA_3	0.887			
Influencer Expertise (X2)	IE_1	0.900	0.864	0.917	0.786
	IE_2	0.876			
	IE_3	0.884			
Influencer Visual Appeal (X3)	IV_1	0.899	0.862	0.915	0.783
	IV_2	0.877			
	IV_3	0.879			
Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) in TikTok (M)	IE_1	0.852	0.825	0.895	0.741
	IE_2	0.880			
	IE_3	0.850			
Gen Z Purchase Intention toward Indonesian Local Cosmetics (Y)	PI_1	0.880	0.847	0.907	0.765
	PI_2	0.860			
	PI_3	0.884			

Source: Authors’ own data processing (2025)

Evaluation of the measurement model was carried out to test the convergent validity, construct reliability, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is assessed through *outer loading*, *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*, and *Composite Reliability (CR)* values. Based on the results of the analysis, all indicators in the construct of influencer authenticity, influencer expertise, influencer's visual appeal, e-WOM on TikTok, and purchase intention had an *outer loading* value above 0.80 and were

statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), so that all indicators were considered to be able to adequately reflect the latent construct (Hair et al., 2021).

The AVE value of the entire construct is in the range of 0.741 to 0.796, which means that it has exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50. Thus, the entire construct can be declared to meet good convergent validity. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha value is in the range of 0.825–0.872, while Composite Reliability is in the range of 0.895–0.921. All of these values exceed the minimum limit of 0.70, thus indicating that each construct has good internal consistency and is reliable for further analysis.

Table 3. Measurement of discriminant validity HTMT

Construct	Authenticity	Purchase Intention	Expertise	Visual Appeal	(e-WOM)
Influencer Authenticity (X1)					
Gen Z Purchase Intention toward Indonesian Local Cosmetics (Y)	0.365				
Influencer Expertise (X2)	0.032	0.159			
Influencer Visual Appeal (X3)	0.049	0.324	0.034		
Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) di TikTok (M)	0.498	0.545	0.361	0.189	

Source: Authors' own data processing (2025)

The validity of the discriminant was tested using the *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio* (HTMT) approach. Referring to Henseler et al., (2015), the discriminant validity is declared adequate if the HTMT value is below 0.85. The results showed that all HTMT values between constructs were below this threshold, with the highest value of 0.498 between influencer authenticity and e-WOM. These findings show that all constructs in the model are empirically different from each other, so the measurement model meets the requirements of discriminant validity and is feasible to proceed to the evaluation of the structural model.

Once the measurement model is declared valid and reliable, the next stage is to evaluate the structural model to assess the strength of the relationship between variables, effect sizes, and the model's ability to explain the variance of endogenous constructs. The effect size was tested using the *f-square* (f^2) value. The results of the analysis showed that the authenticity of influencers had the largest effect measure on e-WOM with a value of 0.273, which belongs to the medium to large category Metsämuuronen, (2024). These findings indicate that marketing efforts to encourage e-WOM should prioritize influencer authenticity, as these attributes make the greatest unique contribution to explaining the formation of e-WOM. Furthermore, the influencer's expertise has an f^2 value of 0.140, which belongs to the medium category, while the influencer's visual appeal has an f^2 value of 0.047, which belongs to the small category. These findings show that compared to the other two attributes, authenticity is the most powerful factor in explaining the formation of e-WOM in the context of TikTok, while visual appeal plays more of a complementary factor than a major driver.

Table 4. Results of F-Square and Q-square

Construct	F-Square	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Influencer Authenticity (X1)	0.273		
Gen Z Purchase Intention toward Indonesian Local Cosmetics (Y)	0.264	0.209	0.206
Influencer Expertise (X2)	0.140		
Influencer Visual Appeal (X3)	0.047		
Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) di TikTok (M)		0.310	0.303

Source: Authors' own data processing (2025)

The explanatory ability of the model is evaluated through *R-square* (R^2) and *Adjusted R-square*. The results of the analysis showed that the e-WOM construct on TikTok had a value of $R^2 = 0.310$ and *Adjusted R² = 0.303*, which means that the authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of influencers together were able to explain 31.0% of e-WOM variations. Meanwhile, the purchase intention construct has a value of $R^2 = 0.264$ and *Adjusted R² = 0.206*, which shows that e-WOM is able to explain 26.4% of the variation in purchase intent. Thus, this research model has a clear power in the moderate category, which means that the model is adequate to explain the phenomenon being studied, although there are still other factors outside the model that also affect e-WOM and consumer purchase intentions, such as religiosity, perception of brand suitability, or the quality of the product itself.

Table 5. Direct Effect and indirect effect

Relationship	Original sample	T statistics	P values	Conclusion
Authenticity -> e-WOM_Tiktok	0,435	9,723	0,000	H ¹ supported
Expertise -> e-WOM_Tiktok	0,311	6,775	0,000	H ² supported
Visual Appeal -> e-WOM_Tiktok	0,180	3,905	0,000	H ³ supported
e-WOM_Tiktok -> Purchase Intention	0,457	9,792	0,000	H ⁴ supported
Authenticity -> e-WOM_Tiktok -> Purchase Intention	0,199	6,453	0,000	H ⁵ supported
Expertise -> e-WOM_Tiktok -> Purchase Intention	0,142	5,322	0,000	H ⁶ supported
Visual Appeal -> e-WOM_Tiktok -> Purchase Intention	0,082	3,514	0,000	H ⁷ supported

Source: Authors' own data processing (2025)

Hypothesis testing was carried out by looking at *the path coefficient*, t-statistics, and p-values from the *bootstrapping* procedure with 5000 samples. The test results show that all hypotheses proposed in this study are empirically supported. In direct relationships, influencer authenticity was proven to have a positive and significant effect on e-WOM on TikTok with values of $\beta = 0.435$, $t = 9.723$, and $p < 0.001$, so H1 was accepted. Furthermore, the influencer's expertise also had a positive and significant effect

on e-WOM with values of $\beta = 0.311$, $t = 6.775$, and $p < 0.001$, so that H2 was accepted. Meanwhile, the visual appeal of influencers also had a positive and significant effect on e-WOM with values of $\beta = 0.180$, $t = 3.905$, and $p < 0.001$, so that H3 was accepted. The test results also showed that e-WOM on TikTok had a positive and significant effect on purchase intent with a value of $\beta = 0.457$, $t = 9.792$, and $p < 0.001$, so H4 was accepted. These findings confirm that e-WOM has an important role in shaping consumer responses to local halal cosmetics, especially among Generation Z who are very active in the social commerce environment.

In addition to direct influence, this study also examines the role of e-WOM mediation in the relationship between influencer attributes and purchase intention. In accordance with the proposed conceptual framework, this study does not hypothesize the direct influence of authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal on purchase intent. Thus, e-WOM is positioned as the only *intervening mechanism* that connects influencer attributes with purchase intention. The results of the analysis showed that e-WOM significantly mediated the influence of influencer authenticity on purchase intent with values of $\beta = 0.199$, $t = 6.453$, and $p < 0.001$, so H5 was accepted. In addition, e-WOM also mediated the influence of influencers' expertise on purchase intent with values of $\beta = 0.142$, $t = 5.322$, and $p < 0.001$, so that H6 was accepted. Finally, e-WOM mediated the influence of influencers' visual appeal on purchase intent with values of $\beta = 0.082$, $t = 3.514$, and $p < 0.001$, so H7 was accepted.

Since all indirect influences are significant and the model does not specify direct pathways, these results confirm that e-WOM acts as *a full mediation* in the research model. In other words, the influence of authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of influencers on purchase intent only occurs through e-WOM as the main intervening mechanism. Among the three influencer attributes tested, authenticity and expertise emerged as the most powerful mediation pathways, while visual appeal played a supporting role that remained significant but contributed relatively small.

5. Discussion

This study aims to analyze the influence of authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of influencers on Generation Z's purchase intentions in Indonesian halal cosmetics, with electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on TikTok as a mediating variable. The results of the study show that all hypotheses proposed are empirically supported. In general, these findings confirm that the effectiveness of influencer marketing on TikTok is not only determined by the existence of the influencer itself, but also by the specific characteristics they display and their ability to encourage communication between consumers through e-WOM. Among the three influencer attributes tested, authenticity and expertise were stronger drivers than visual appeal, while e-WOM served as an important mechanism that translated influencer characteristics into consumer responses.

The first findings show that influencer authenticity has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM. These results indicate that when influencers are perceived as genuine, honest, and genuinely using or understanding the product being promoted, consumers tend to trust the message being conveyed more. This trust then encourages consumer involvement in e-WOM activities, such as commenting, sharing experiences, or

recommending products to other users. In the context of TikTok, authenticity is very important because this platform is dominated by a spontaneous, personal, and close communication style to users' daily lives. Generation Z tends to be sensitive to promotional content that is too formal, too scripted, or too commercial. Therefore, when influencers are able to appear naturally and convincingly, promotional messages become more receptive and more likely to spread through e-WOM. These results are in line with the research of Jamil et al., (2023) and García-Haro et al., (2024), which show that authenticity strengthens trust, connectedness, and audience participation in the dissemination of digital communications.

This finding is also important contextually because the object of the research is Indonesian halal cosmetics. In the halal product category, consumers not only consider functional aspects such as quality and price, but also value dimensions, moral suitability, and trust in the product. Therefore, influencer authenticity not only serves as a communication strategy, but also as a mechanism for establishing social legitimacy for brands. Influencers who are perceived to be genuine and aligned with the product's values can reinforce consumers' belief that the brand is trustworthy. This explains why in the results of this study, authenticity emerged as the strongest predictor of e-WOM.

The second finding shows that influencers' expertise has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM. These results show that consumers are more motivated to disseminate, discuss, and trust information that comes from influencers who are perceived to have knowledge, competence, and credibility about the products being promoted. In the context of halal cosmetics, expertise is very relevant because beauty products are often related to fairly technical information (Liew & Karia, 2024) such as ingredient content, product safety, suitability for certain skin types, as well as halal certification aspects. Influencers who are able to convincingly explain the product provide higher information value to the audience, thus increasing the likelihood of positive e-WOM formation. These findings are in line with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which places the expertise of sources as a factor that strengthens the central pathway of persuasion. When consumers view influencers as a competent source, they will process messages more seriously and more in depth (Lavoye et al., 2023) increasing message acceptance and more meaningful engagement. Compared to authenticity, the influence of expertise is indeed slightly lower, but it is still strong and significant. This can be interpreted that the Generation Z audience on TikTok is not only looking for "honest" figures, but also needs influencers who "understand". Thus, expertise serves as an informative value reinforcement of influencer content.

The third finding shows that the visual appeal of influencers also has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM, although the power of influence is smaller than that of authenticity and expertise. These results show that the visual element remains important in TikTok marketing, as the platform does rely heavily on visual quality, content aesthetics, and the ability to attract attention in a short period of time. (Shabalina & Nelson, 2025) Content that is pleasing to the eye, aesthetically appealing, and well-presented can evoke positive emotions, increase audience enjoyment, and encourage interactions such as likes, comments, or sharing experiences. These findings are consistent with ELM's view that source appeal can work through peripheral pathways, i.e. when consumers are affected by visual and emotional cues without always having to

process the content of the message in depth. However, the low relative strength of visual appeal compared to the other two attributes suggests that visual appeal is not the main factor in forming e-WOM in the context of this study. In other words, an attractive display can indeed help create initial attention, but it is not enough to produce strong digital communication if it is not backed by sincerity and competence. These findings may also reflect the characteristics of TikTok users who are more concerned with authenticity than perfect aesthetics, in contrast to platforms like Instagram that emphasize visual curation. Future cross-platform research could test this possibility.

The fourth finding shows that e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase intentions. These results confirm that the opinions, recommendations, comments, and experiences circulating digitally on TikTok play an important role in shaping consumer evaluations and decisions. (Zafar & Saleem, 2025) In a social commerce environment, e-WOM serves as a social proof that helps consumers reduce uncertainty and assess whether a product is worth trying. For Generation Z, who are very accustomed to the consumption of information through social media and rely heavily on validation from the digital community, e-WOM is one of the most powerful sources of influence. These findings are consistent with studies by Li & Jaharuddin, (2021), Ngo et al., (2024), and Zaman et al., (2021), which show that positive e-WOM can increase brand credibility, strengthen consumer trust, and drive purchase intent.

Furthermore, the results of the mediation analysis showed that e-WOM significantly mediated the relationship between the authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal of influencers and purchase intent. This finding is one of the main contributions of the research, because it shows that influencer attributes do not work in isolation or directly, but through social-communicative mechanisms that are manifested in e-WOM. (Bialkova, 2024) The indirect influence of authenticity on purchase intent through e-WOM was the strongest, followed by expertise, while visual appeal had the least indirect but still significant influence. In the context of the tested model, these findings show a pattern of full mediation (or indirect-only mediation), i.e. when the influence of influencer attributes on purchase intent only occurs through e-WOM as the main mechanism.

From a theoretical perspective, these mediation findings reinforce the argument that in modern digital marketing, the source of persuasion does not work linearly at all. Audiences don't automatically buy just because an influencer seems authentic, expert, or attractive. Instead, these attributes first shape perceptions, trigger engagement, and then stimulate the flow of digital communication between consumers which ultimately influences purchase intent. Thus, e-WOM can be understood as a transformational mechanism that transforms the characteristics of influencers into consumer actions. (Pang & Wang, 2025)

In addition, the results of this study also show that the model has moderate clear power, with an e-WOM R^2 of 0.310 and a purchase intention of 0.264. This means that while authenticity, expertise, visual appeal, and e-WOM have proven to be significant, the model has not yet explained the entire variation in consumer purchase intent. This means that there are still other factors outside the model that may also influence Generation Z's purchase intention for halal cosmetics, such as religiosity, the perception of influencers' compatibility with the brand, price, product quality, brand identification,

or trust in halal certification. These limitations open up opportunities for future research to integrate these variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Overall, the findings of this study provide three main affirmations. First, in the context of TikTok and local halal cosmetics, authenticity is the most decisive attribute of influencers in shaping e-WOM. Second, expertise also plays a powerful role as it provides informational legitimacy and strengthens the central line of persuasion. Third, visual appeal remains relevant, but it serves more as a supporting factor that magnifies the appeal of the message, rather than as the main determinant. Meanwhile, e-WOM emerged as a key mechanism that bridged the influence of influencer attributes on purchase intent

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the role of influencer attributes authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal in shaping Generation Z's purchase intention toward Indonesian halal cosmetics, with electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on TikTok serving as a mediating mechanism. The findings confirm that all three influencer characteristics significantly and positively influence e-WOM, which in turn significantly affects purchase intention. More importantly, e-WOM functions as a full mediator in the relationships between each influencer attribute and purchase intention, indicating that the influence of authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal on consumer purchasing decisions is transmitted entirely through the electronic word-of-mouth generated on TikTok.

Among the three attributes examined, authenticity emerges as the strongest driver of e-WOM, followed by expertise, while visual appeal plays a significant yet supplementary role. These findings underscore that in the context of TikTok a platform characterized by spontaneity, personal connection, and peer-like communication consumers respond most strongly to influencers who are perceived as genuine and trustworthy. Expertise remains critical for providing informational value, particularly in the halal cosmetics category where technical knowledge about ingredients, product safety, and halal certification is essential. Visual appeal, while still relevant for capturing initial attention, functions primarily as an enhancing factor rather than a primary driver of consumer engagement and persuasion.

7. Theoretical and practical implications

This study contributes to the influencer marketing literature by integrating three key influencer attributes into a single analytical framework and demonstrating the pivotal mediating role of e-WOM in translating these characteristics into consumer purchase intentions. The findings advance theoretical understanding by showing that influencer effectiveness in social commerce environments operates through a social-communicative mechanism, where consumer-to-consumer digital interactions serve as the essential conduit through which influencer messages are validated, amplified, and ultimately transformed into purchasing decisions.

From a managerial perspective, the results offer actionable insights for local halal cosmetic brands seeking to optimize their influencer marketing strategies on TikTok. Brands should prioritize collaborations with influencers who demonstrate genuine

authenticity and credible expertise in the halal beauty domain, as these attributes are most effective in generating positive e-WOM. Additionally, brands should design campaigns that actively encourage consumer conversations, user-generated content, and community engagement, thereby leveraging e-WOM as a strategic asset to strengthen purchase intentions among Gen Z consumers.

8. Limitations and suggestions for further research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of purposive non-probability sampling, with a sample dominated by female and highly educated respondents, limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader Gen Z population. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences, and the self-reported nature of the data may carry inherent biases, although statistical testing indicated that common method bias was not a major concern. Furthermore, the moderate R^2 values suggest that other important factors—such as religiosity, brand congruence, price perception, product quality, and halal certification trust—may also influence purchase intention and should be incorporated in future research.

Future studies are encouraged to employ more diverse and representative samples, adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causality, and extend the model across different platforms (e.g., Instagram, YouTube) and product categories to examine whether the relative importance of influencer attributes varies across contexts. Comparative studies between TikTok and other social media platforms would be particularly valuable to understand how platform characteristics moderate the effectiveness of authenticity, expertise, and visual appeal in driving e-WOM and consumer behavior

9. References

- Ali, M., Khan, M. N., & Fatima, T. (2025). Digital influencers and consumer buying behavior: Evidence from emerging markets. *Journal of Business Research*, *171*, 114352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.114352>
- Ardyan, E., Kurniawan, D., Istiatin, I., & Luhglatno, L. (2021). Does Customers' Attitude Toward Negative eWOM Affect Their Panic Buying Activity in Purchasing Products? Customers Satisfaction During COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. *Cogent Business & Management*, *8*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1952827>
- BeauVis. (2022). Visual appeal and consumer perception in influencer marketing. *International Journal of Advertising*, *41*(6), 955–976. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1986204>
- Bialkova, S. (2024). The Rise of AI User Applications. In *The Rise of AI User Applications*. Springer.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- García-Haro, M. Á., Ruiz-Palomino, P., Cañas, R. M., & Martínez-Ruiz, M. P. (2024). Assessing the Drivers to Share the Content on Social Media in Tourism: The Empirical Evidence on a World Heritage City. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejmbe-03-2023-0084>

- Guedes Furquim, T. S., Quaesner, L. S., Martins, T. S., & Korelo, J. C. (2025). Beyond Clicks and Likes: A Typology of Affect in Digital Marketing. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejmbe-08-2024-0278>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2021). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Hanafiah, M. H., & Hamdan, N. A. A. (2021). Determinants of Muslim travellers Halal food consumption attitude and behavioural intentions. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 12(6), 1197–1218.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115–135.
- Huwaida, L. A. (2024). Generation Z and Indonesian Social Commerce: Unraveling key drivers of their shopping decisions. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 10(2), 100256.
- Istikhoroh, S., Moeljadi, M., Sudarma, M., & Aisjah, S. (2021). Does Social Media Marketing as Moderating Relationship Between Intellectual Capital and Organizational Sustainability Through University Managerial Intelligence? (Empirical Studies at Private Universities in East Java). *Cogent Business & Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1905198>
- Jamil, R. A., Qayyum, U., Hassan, S. R. u., & Khan, T. I. (2023). Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumers' Well-Being And purchase Intention: A TikTok Perspective. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, 33(3), 366–385. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejmbe-08-2022-0270>
- Lavoye, V., Sipilä, J., Mero, J., & Tarkiainen, A. (2023). The emperor's new clothes: self-explorative engagement in virtual try-on service experiences positively impacts brand outcomes. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 37(10), 1–21.
- Lee, J. E., & Eastin, M. S. (2021). Authenticity in influencer marketing: Antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 21(1), 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2021.1873766>
- Li, S., & Jaharuddin, N. S. (2021). Influences of Background Factors on Consumers' Purchase Intention in China's Organic Food Market: Assessing Moderating Role of Word-of-Mouth (WOM). *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1876296>
- Liew, C. W. S., & Karia, N. (2024). Halal cosmetics: a technology-empowered systematic literature review. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 15(7), 1722–1742.
- Maziriri, E. T., Rukuni, T. F., & Chuchu, T. (2021). Factors Influencing Food Consumption Satisfaction and Purchase Decisions of Restaurant Consumers. *Cogent Business & Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1968731>
- Metsämuuronen, J. (2024). R effect size and generalized Cohen'sd: Refined thresholds for “small”, “medium”, and “large” r effect size for the dichotomous and polytomous settings. *Preprint at Http://Dx. Doi. Org/10.13140/RG. 2(27966.66888)*.
- Ngo, T. T. A., Vuong, B. L., Le, M. D., Nguyen, T. T., Tran, M. M., & Nguyen, Q. K. (2024). The impact of eWOM information in social media on the online purchase intention of Generation Z. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2316933. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2316933>
- Palazón, M., Carmen Alarcón-del-Amo, M. del, Martínez, B., & López, M. (2024).

- Consumers' Healthy Lifestyle as a Determinant of the Influence of Microcelebrities and Microinfluencers. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejmbe-02-2024-0041>
- Pang, H., & Wang, J. (2025). Determining multi-dimensional motivations driving e-WOM intention and purchase intention on WeChat: the significant role of active participation. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, 77(1), 113–132.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Prabawati, N., & Fadhillah, A. (2024). Electronic word of mouth and consumer purchase decisions in social commerce. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 62, 101279. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2023.101279>
- Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., & Hair, J. F. (2022). Partial least squares structural equation modeling: Rigorous applications, better results and higher acceptance. *Long Range Planning*, 55(4), 102163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2021.102163>
- Shabalina, O., & Nelson, M. R. (2025). Reconsidering Ad design practices and visual aesthetics in social media interactive spaces: toward a conceptual framework. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 25(2), 139–156.
- Urinbaeva, G., Khasanova, D., & Clugston, C. J. (2023). The Effect of Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility on Purchase Intention in Mobile Commerce: Mediating Roles of Trusting Beliefs and Satisfaction. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejmbe-12-2022-0382>
- Zafar, M., & Saleem, S. (2025). Algorithmic Influence of Social Media Platforms on Public Opinion and Economic Decisions in the Digital Age. *Journal of International Relations and Social Dynamics*, 4(1), 48–59.
- Zaman, U., Bolia, B., & Anjam, M. (2021). Do Women Customers Love to Talk About Financial Brands? An Empirical Evidence on the Mediated Service Responsiveness and Brand Sincerity in Creating a Positive Word of Mouth. *Cogent Business & Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1945426>